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ABSTRACT

This synthesis report summarizes a conference organized to examine the current situation regarding the continuing education and training of adults in the European Community and to formulate proposals for action. Some 60 conference participants examined various research reports, conducted discussions, and presented papers on three major topics: continuing education and training strategies, current policies and programs, and innovative approaches to technological and economic change. The conference participants concluded that continuing education and training for adults lacks resources and has unequal access, unequal distribution among enterprises of various sizes, and inadequate training techniques and contents. The conference concluded that the approaches lacked consistency. The following recommendations were made: (1) reforming education and training policies and provisions; (2) formulating a better response to the needs of underprivileged groups; (3) reforming initial education and training systems; (4) using continuing education and training as a local and regional development tool; (5) making industry play its part; (6) developing more rational and more consistent methods of financing; and (7) facilitating the exchange of ideas and experience in the European Community. (KC)

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CEDEFOP

Synthesis report on a
conference organized by CEDEFOP
8-9 March 1984

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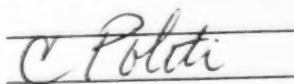
Continuing education and training and the labour market Synthesis report

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INTRODUCTION

This synthesis conference report summarizes the inputs and outputs to a conference organized by CEDEFOP from 7-9 March 1984 in Berlin. The report has been prepared for CEDEFOP by Ms Adelheid Hege of Centre Inffo (Paris). Centre Inffo are also preparing for CEDEFOP a comprehensive report on the conference containing the various working documents presented, the reports of the working groups and summaries of the main oral contributions. This will be published by CEDEFOP in English, French and German.

CEDEFOP wishes to acknowledge the co-operation not only of Adelheid Hege and Centre Inffo in preparing this report, but also of those who prepared documents for, and participated in the conference. CEDEFOP hopes that this report and the clear indications from the conference of the necessity for major policy initiatives with relation to continuing education and training for adults in the evolving labour market situation, will be of assistance to policy makers at both Community and national level.

Roger Faist
Director

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I - AIMS AND WORK OF THE CONFERENCE

In a context of crisis and unemployment, an examination of the relationships between continuing education and training and employment is crucial. It is necessary in this respect to encourage the development and proliferation of initiatives likely to have a positive effect on the labour market: the retraining of job applicants, training designed to provide expertise in new technologies, the development of skills, support for new activities and for the creation of new businesses, contributions to local economic development etc. In this context, the development of continuing education and training strategies has an important role to play.

The aim of the conference on "Continuing Education and Training and the Labour Market", which was organised by CEDEFOP and took place on 7th-9th March 1984 in Berlin, was to enable a small number of participants to examine the current situation regarding the continuing education and training of adults in the Member States of the European Community, and to formulate proposals for future action, on the basis of:

- the conclusions of a first conference organised by CEDEFOP and the Commission of the European Communities on "New Perspectives in Continuing Education and Training" (1);
- the recommendations regarding the training of adults as set out in the Council resolution of 11th July 1983 on "Vocational Training Policies in the European Community in the 1980s" (2);
- the results of three recently published reports commissioned by CEDEFOP dealing, from different points of view, with the response of continuing education and training to the current problems of the labour market (3).

The aim of the conference was to analyse research results and to compare experiences in various countries so as to be able to lay down guidelines and formulate proposals to be used as a basis for the work of the Commission of the European Communities, CEDEFOP and the national authorities concerned.

The conference was attended by some sixty participants: Representatives of the authorities involved in this field in the ten countries of the Community (education, employment, vocational training), employers, trade unionists, specialists and research workers, as well as representatives of the European Communities and international bodies: OECD, Council of Europe, International Labour Organization.

M. Roger Faist, Director of CEDEFOP, opened the conference with a short speech of welcome. Much time was devoted to reports by the representatives of each of the ten governments who outlined the most important aspects of their activities and pinpointed the key problems remaining to be solved. A representative of the Commission of the European Communities outlined the development of national policies and community action and looked at the prospects for action on an European level. The representatives of the international organizations explained the approaches made in this field by their various bodies.

The main work of the conference took the form of discussion groups which, on the basis of the outcome of research carried out by CEDEFOP in the field of continuing education and training and discussion papers prepared by their authors, dealt with three major topics:

- a first working group examining continuing education and training strategies was to provide a contribution towards the development of concerted and consistent approaches designed

to prevent unemployment, to assist in the creation of activities and to accompany long-term changes;

- a second group dealing with the concrete topic of current policies and programmes, was to discuss the financial, institutional and organizational factors likely to improve the range of training available to adults;

- a third group examined the innovative approaches developed in the Member States in response to technological and economic change and changes in the organization of labour, as well as the needs of certain target groups, in particular the long-term unemployed, and was to deal with methods of diffusing and integrating innovative developments throughout continuing education and training structures.

The scope of the conference was therefore very wide-ranging and it could hardly be expected - bearing in mind the short amount of time available - that a definitive outcome would be achieved on a topic likely to be interpreted in many ways. It became obvious, moreover, that there are at present no instant solutions to the key problems of employment and training which, having been tried and tested in some countries, could be put to immediate use in others. More provision must be made in this field for common discussion so that we may move forward together.

It was precisely this aim which the conference achieved: to provide an improved awareness of the potential and the current limits of continuing education and training in its application to the labour market, and to map out the guidelines for national and Community action to promote the continuing education and training of adults.

The following text reports in the first instance on the results

of research commissioned by CEDEFOP which sum up, to a certain extent, the current situation regarding continuing education and training, and then deals with the conclusions and recommendations of the conference, as put forward by the discussion groups and the plenary sessions which followed them.



The CEDEFOP-reports

II - THE CEDEFOP REPORTS: AN UNSATISFACTORY RECORD OF
CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT THE BEGINNING OF
THE EIGHTIES

In order to obtain improved information on the range of education and training available to adults, to find out how they could go about obtaining this education and training and to discover, in particular, whether new approaches which were better suited to developments in the labour market were emerging, CEDEFOP commissioned and financed, between 1980 and 1982, three research projects in the field of continuing education and training.

This involved finding out:

- whether, on one hand, innovative projects were being carried out in a significant number of Community countries, and whether there were trends within these projects from which it would be possible to develop coherent education and training strategies, in particular in three areas:

- . education and training in new technologies,
- . education and training activities, basically within companies, designed to prevent unemployment,
- . education and training designed to assist the unemployed, and in particular the long-term unemployed (4);

- whether, on the other hand, there had been a change of direction in continuing education and training policies in European countries leading to education and training becoming an active employment policy instrument designed to prevent unemployment (5);

- whether, finally, legislation and the institutional framework of continuing education and training could play a part in discussion on a new distribution of work, as a result in particular of the development of work/study alternance throughout working life, and whether, in this context, education and training leave has positive repercussions on the labour market (6).

The results of this research show that continuing education and training is largely unable to meet the demands placed upon it across the entire range of approaches made within widely varying national contexts.

Although, in the area of innovations (4), there are certainly a large number of initiatives based on a flexible, modular and decentralised approach, using the new technologies as training means and in particular developing the use of distance learning, in overall terms, the range of training available does not, however, appear to be adequate:

- This type of training is aimed in very few cases at unemployed adults, and in particular the long-term unemployed. In particular, new technology training is aimed chiefly at company employees. In addition, the training available takes little account of the low qualification level of this group and does not provide for long enough periods of remedial training.

- The development of innovative activities for adults is

hampered by the lack of resources allocated to it. In the majority of Member States funds are being transferred from the continuing education and training of adults to the education, training and integration of the young.

- Innovative education and training has not, up to now, passed the stage of isolated experiments which are often merely pretexts, and only spread slowly and incompletely through continuing education and training structures.

It appears, moreover, that continuing education and training is far from being able to satisfy the requirements that it should prevent unemployment (5). In the face of continuing massive unemployment and an economic crisis which has belatedly been seen to be far-reaching and long-term, European countries have developed strategies which are largely defensive rather than offensive:

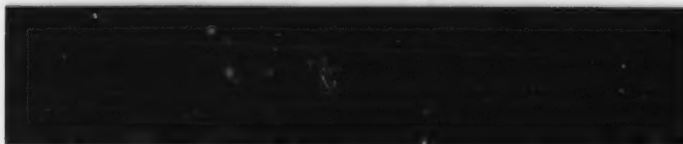
- In the face of budget restrictions, the money allocated to continuing education and training is very severely restricted or priority allocation is given to ad hoc measures designed to assist certain target groups: the young, women, the unemployed etc. Vocational training of adults therefore tends to move away from its initial aim of professional advancement and retraining to meet the needs of the production system.

- Government policy is largely based on retiring the work force from the labour market, in particular by developing early retirement schemes, rather than on the promotion of training activities.

- The only types of training which take the form of preventive measures are, in this context, the retraining measures currently taking place within the framework of the re-organization of businesses, sectors of activity and regions.

The current legislation and provisions relating to individual education and training leave have no overall effect on the employment situation and have little effect on the skills and employability of the work force. This is the conclusion reached by the third report commissioned by CEDEFOP (6).

Only a very small percentage (less than 0.1%) of the working population benefits from the possibilities offered by this legislation. Women, workers having few or no qualifications, employees of small and medium enterprise are not affected to any great extent, and in any case much less so than managerial staff, public sector employees and staff representatives. Although the majority of Member States signed the 1974 ILO convention on paid educational leave, they have done little to develop the range of education and training available in this area.



The conference results

III - THE WORK OF THE CONFERENCE: DEVELOPING INTEGRATED AND
DIVERSIFIED EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICIES

The conclusions of the research reports were largely confirmed by the conference delegates.

Inadequate resources which continue to be given priority allocation to the training and professional integration of the young, both at the national and the Community level; unequal access to training from which the large majority of the working population is excluded and which does not meet the requirements of the unemployed in particular; unequal distribution of continuing education and training programmes between large, small and medium-sized enterprises, and between regional and local areas; inadequate education and training techniques and contents. The conference concluded that approaches lacked consistency, with the result that efforts were squandered and misapplied, and attempted to discover guidelines for future action accordingly.

REFORM OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVISION

National and Community policies in this field should work, above all, towards the improvement and diversification of the range of education and training available to adults. This involves:

- offering training which is not simply a copy of the teaching given to young people, but is adapted to the specific needs of adults;
- formulating the range of training available so that it responds to developments in the labour market.

Training designed for adults should take into account previous experience as well as the specific difficulties of people who have left the education system, often many years before.

Training should therefore draw, as far as possible, on the life and work experience of adults:

- by integrating it into the education and training, and therefore sustaining the motivation of the participants;
- by taking it into account in selection for vocational training (in cases where there is an actual link between this experience and the training in question) in the same way as the formal qualifications obtained during previous education.

In order to bring adults into training, it would also be advisable:

- to promote vocational guidance and counselling and possibly even to make this a compulsory step in the process;
- to rethink the pretraining and remedial education of adults who often have a level of skills which is either too low or inappropriate for direct entry into vocational training - and to avoid, in this respect as well, education and training which is merely an imitation of the teaching given to school-children;
- to take into account, when planning training, the learning speed and the specific difficulties encountered by adults, to give priority to short, modular courses, to decentralize as far as possible the administration of education and training schemes so that adults are not prevented from taking part by times and places;
- to pay particular attention to instruction techniques, to develop schemes alternating study and practical vocational experience enabling adults to be trained at the speed which suits them, using, in particular, distance learning, and to make greater use of the new technologies as a means of learning.

Whilst alternance training and modular training may encourage individual requests for training, they also enable the range of training offered to be more readily adapted to employment developments. The new information technologies make this type of adaptation increasingly necessary precisely because their extremely diversified applications and their rapid speed of introduction, make them likely to affect all jobs in the near future. Continuing education and training is

therefore confronted:

- with a new audience, amongst which people who are not used to learning have an important position,
- with new contents which may evolve rapidly and then become outdated (possibly even before they are included in training programmes).

In this context there will have to be a great deal of innovation in continuing education and training if it is to:

- provide the work force with the skills to master new techniques and new jobs,
- overcome psychological resistance to the new technologies,
- prepare for the changes in the organization of work and working relationships which accompany technological change to an extent which is not fully appreciated at present.

Several conditions must be satisfied in order to be able to improve the training offered:

- the training of trainers must be reformed both with respect to their qualifications and experience (which should be more diversified) and the continuous updating of their professional knowledge;
- improved information on training must be made available both to protagonists and policy-makers and to individuals;
- the needs and impacts of training should be evaluated as a general practice with pilot projects (and not only projects of this type) being evaluated in all cases;

- there should be increased and more widespread coordination of the activities of all the protagonists involved.

A BETTER RESPONSE TO THE NEEDS OF UNDERPRIVILEGED GROUPS

A second field of activity dealt with at the conference concerns the "target groups" of training. In this area there must be movement away from positive discrimination towards a more comprehensive treatment of underprivileged groups, and measures designed to provide these groups with access to the normal range of training available to adults.

All the countries of Europe have implemented, for the most part since the end of the seventies, vocational training and integration measures aimed at certain specific categories of the population: the young, the unemployed, women, migrant workers, the handicapped etc. Although there can be no question that these measures are justified, their implementation on a large scale leads, however, to risks of a different type:

- Continuing education and training activities are diverted towards measures involving aid, generally of a short-term nature, to the detriment of in-firm training and therefore the productive sector. As these measures are, in most cases the responsibility of the public authorities, this could lead to an undesirable distribution of tasks (the "emergency" measures being the responsibility of the public sector and the continuing education and training of employees being the responsibility of the private sector), whereas there should in effect be an improved coordination and interaction between public and private activities (see below).
- Massive investment in the training of young people may

produce a gulf within the working population in terms of qualifications, with young people obtaining relatively high-level qualifications, whilst those of adult employees remain static, as the range of refresher and remedial education and training has not developed at a corresponding speed.

- It is difficult for the "target-group" policy to prevent the social exclusion of these groups and undesirable effects, both social and economic (segmentation of the labour market) are consequently intensified.

The conference delegates considered, however, that the position of the long-term unemployed called for particular attention, if only because the range of training offered to this sector of the population, which is very difficult to provide with the motivation for training and which is, more so than other sectors, given very little chance to master technological changes, is particularly inadequate both in terms of quality and quantity.

However this also involves the development of a comprehensive approach which, by filling the educational gaps (of a general nature) of the long-term unemployed, would enable their permanent re-integration into the working population. The conference proposed that efforts should be made to achieve a dual objective:

- to create a new balance between professional qualifications and social abilities;
- to pay particular attention to the development of basic skills.

It was widely agreed that within the present context of massive unemployment, "training for jobs" (7) is somewhat

problematical in so far as a large number of the unemployed, even those who have been trained, will remain without jobs. It would be dangerous, both from a social and an economic point of view to isolate a fringe which is not "affected", a priori, by training, within the working or even the unemployed population. It is for this reason that the training of adults should be understood in a wider sense and should always give equal emphasis to social abilities and technical and vocational knowledge. These social abilities, including the ability to adapt to and master technological changes as well as the ability to deal with a difficult social and psychological situation, may not always provide an immediate return on the labour market, but constitute a more promising basis for future professional development and in any case provide an improved ability to handle life and therefore an improved enjoyment of life.

Obtaining and holding down a job also depends on a certain minimum level of knowledge which is not possessed by the majority of the long-term unemployed, or, moreover, by a large number of employees. Providing these people with certain basic tools enabling them to achieve technical mastery of job techniques and combatting illiteracy, the extent of which is now known, is a considerable task which is augmented by the fact that technological change does not only affect these basic skills, but produces large numbers of new technological "illiterates". Considerable resources should be devoted to solving this problem. The Community has made some steps in this direction by setting up several series of pilot projects in this area.

REFORMING INITIAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS

Improved coordination between the initial education and training

of young people and the continuing education and training of adults is an important objective in this context. Although the conference was unable to deal with this third question in any depth, it had no difficulty in reaching a consensus on the need to improve and better define the connection between the two systems of training.

It would appear indispensable in all countries - in order, moreover, to achieve a more rational and more equitable distribution of financial resources - to:

- rally all public and private teaching and training resources to prevent the entire effort involved in training for jobs from resting solely on continuing education and training. Higher education, for example, is often very under-exploited and its capacity for training in response to the needs of business is generally underestimated;
- rethink the initial education and training of young people which does not satisfactorily prepare the young for professional life, and to develop in particular alternance programmes involving periods of study interspersed with periods devoted to the acquisition of professional experience.

Innovations in the field of continuing education and training could also be used as a guideline for reforms in initial education which technological change is making increasingly urgent. The young should be introduced to and should be provided with the tools required to master the new technologies within the initial education system, not only by means of a "computer science" subject added to the other subjects which they are taught, but by teaching designed to provide a deeper technological culture.

CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING: A TOOL OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A fourth area of activity and innovation discussed at the conference involves the development of continuing education and training at the local and regional level.

The advantages of decentralised approaches have long been proven. A large number of initiatives contained within regionalization policies, undertaken recently in some cases, were reported by the national representatives, and ambitious programmes have been developed in this area by the European Communities and some international organizations (Council of Europe, OECD).

It would appear that with the continuation of the economic crisis and in particular the drain of population away from a number of declining areas, the priority attention given to the employment basins and the major industrial areas is now focused to a greater extent on local potential, including rural and semi-industrial areas, as well as the districts of large towns and cities.

Two main effects are expected from the development of training programmes in connection with local development:

- a continuing education and training approach which is more flexible and more effective,
- the rebuilding and revitalization of the local economic fabric (or at least a contribution enabling movement in this direction).

Since it provides a sharper focus, the local area seems to be the best place to find solutions to the current inadequacies of continuing education and training:

- It enables diagnosis. It is at this level that the problems of the community - unemployment, redevelopment, illiteracy, integration problems etc. - are revealed and detected on a daily basis,
- It enables specific action, and consequently action which is better suited to individual and collective needs, to be taken,
- In certain cases it enables prevention. If detected in time, certain problems such as illiteracy have more chance of being dealt with before the individual drama becomes, within the framework of economic reorganization for example, a collective drama.

The regional and local approach of training has a second objective: to contribute to local and regional development. Whilst the conference stressed the importance of this aspect of training, it also noted the extent and complexity of the task. This involves, within a context of unemployment and industrial reorganization, revitalizing a local fabric which is generally poor or impoverished and creating the conditions for a new type of development. This objective has both an economic and a cultural dimension. An economic redevelopment policy requires, on the one hand, measures designed to integrate support for the small and medium-sized enterprises already in existence and for the establishment of new enterprises, with the relocation of excess labour from declining sectors of activity, and the implementation of training programmes designed to accompany attempts to modernise businesses in future growth sectors etc. In order to achieve this, there must, on the other hand, be a population which is able to come to terms with this modernization, to play an active part in the "cultural shock" which the reorganization

of a region in crisis involves. An obstacle to the achievement of this objective is often the demographic structure of the working population since the young have left these regions and the number of pensioners is on the increase as a result of the lowering of the age of retirement.

In order to overcome these difficulties, it appears necessary:

- on one hand, to plan training in a wider sense so that it takes into account the problems posed by local development and includes cultural action, regional planning, economic and industrial measures, educational activities etc.
- on the other hand, by combining and coordinating the work of all the protagonists: institutional policy-makers and training and employment officers so that it is possible to find connections and inter-actions between local development policies and sector development policies, between local and regional initiatives and national policies, between State education, and continuing education and training and employment administered jointly by industry and the State.

MAKING INDUSTRY PLAY ITS PART

The emergence and development of regional approaches also involves further consideration of the interactions between the activities of the protagonists concerned. In this context, the conference came out in favour - and this may be considered as a fifth conclusion and recommendation - of a relocation of continuing training responsibilities so that they rest again with enterprise, and in particular the SME.

Whilst the increased importance given by both sides to training organised by and within enterprise was often stressed

during the conference, it was also noted that large businesses were the prime movers in this area, making considerable efforts in some cases, whilst there was very disparate and inadequate activity on the part of small and medium businesses and as far as new activities were concerned.

It was widely agreed, by the employers, as well as by trade unionists and government representatives, that continuing training of the work force was the responsibility of industry. It is within the firm:

- that the required adaptation to technological change and to new skills should take place and where preventive measures should consequently take root;
- that alternation between periods of work and periods of study, which appears to be the most successful permanent education model, takes on its full meaning;
- that there is an educational environment which is still under-exploited, which could, however, contribute to the emergence of a new qualification policy in which training would only be one factor.

Whilst it is necessary to (re)valorize the role of enterprises in this area, it has also been clearly shown that this "relocation" should be integrated into an overall public framework, guaranteeing consistent social and economic development. This public framework would appear to be necessary for several reasons:

- it enables the participation of all the protagonists to be organized;
- it enables not only the short-term, but also the medium and long-term, planning and organization of continuing

education and training;

- it allows for the development of contractual policies between partners and ensures joint responsibility. It guarantees the interconnection and consistency of training strategies both inside and outside of enterprise and enables the implementation of inter-firm and inter-sector training;
- it guarantees public intervention;
- it enables every vocational training programme to find its place within the overall continuing education and training, and qualification system.

DEVELOPING MORE RATIONAL AND MORE CONSISTENT METHODS OF FINANCING

The sixth question discussed during the conference dealt with the effects on the necessary financial commitments and the responsibility for the financing of continuing education and training of the extension and diversification of the range of training available and the more equal distribution of continuing education and training through the industrial fabric, the sectors and the local and regional areas.

A significant increase in the funds allocated to continuing education and training would appear, at present, to be difficult to implement, as pressure on both public and private budgets is far too great. The question was therefore rather one of discovering new methods for a more equitable and more effective distribution of the small resources available.

Two different points of view were, however, put forward with

respect to private participation in continuing education and training:

- some delegates stated - and this was an argument put forward chiefly by the employers - that additional efforts in this area would represent a burden which was too great for firms already subject to heavy demands, and that investment going beyond training which could be put into immediate use, in terms of skills, within firms might jeopardize profitable operation;

- other delegates maintained that financial restrictions would necessarily involve a decrease in the quantity and quality of continuing education and training, and that an improvement and extension of the existing arrangements was necessary in order to guarantee the mobility, flexibility and versatility of the work force.

The conference supported, however, the principle of joint public and private financing schemes in order to concentrate efforts and to make continuing education and training policies more effective and more consistent. It also stressed the advantages of contractual policies likely to commit labour and management and the State to common objectives.

It was also proposed that research should be carried out (in this area, CEDEFOP could provide a valuable contribution) into:

- alternative financing methods and schemes likely to improve both the range of continuing education and training available and the access of adults to training of this type within the framework of individual permanent education (for example educational and training leave): setting up of collective funds, interest-free loan schemes etc.:

- the effects of various schemes, and in particular joint financing schemes, in the countries of the European Community.

FACILITATING THE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS AND EXPERIENCE IN THE COMMUNITY

The consistency of national and Community continuing education and training strategies was the seventh area of action discussed by the conference, which dealt with this question chiefly from the point of view of the exchange of information, ideas and experience required.

Before advances can be made in this field, the necessary tools must be provided in order to enable a more rational and efficient distribution of the resources available in the Member States of the Community, and it should be understood that the successful assimilation of information and experience may prevent many wrong turnings, costly in terms of time and money, in the implementation of training policies and projects.

In addition to conventional methods such as comparative studies, international seminars etc., these tools could involve information networks enabling:

- Policy-makers to be informed of developments and innovative trends abroad, and to learn not only from successful applications but also from failures and from difficulties in implementing such policies and projects;
- Specialists to obtain immediate information on projects likely to be of use in their own work.

Two types of network may be envisaged:

- The first, based on the exchange of information, should be flexible and as decentralised as possible. This network would preferably be based on a network of correspondents in the Member States and in the Community, and could fulfil the minor task of distributing information, although its main task in this context would be to act as a forum for the exchange of information and for the monitoring of current developments. The European information cooperation network, set up and run by CEDEFOP, could develop its activities in this direction.

- In order to provide an improved exchange and reduction of information, personnel exchanges should be promoted and contacts should also be organised between protagonists in various areas on the basis of their common concerns as one of the means for promoting consistent and diversified continuing education and training strategies within the Community. The European Community has taken some steps in this direction by developing Community networks of pilot projects which it is extending to basic training for adults and local economic development, and by setting up a programme of short study visits for vocational training specialists in the Member States.

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